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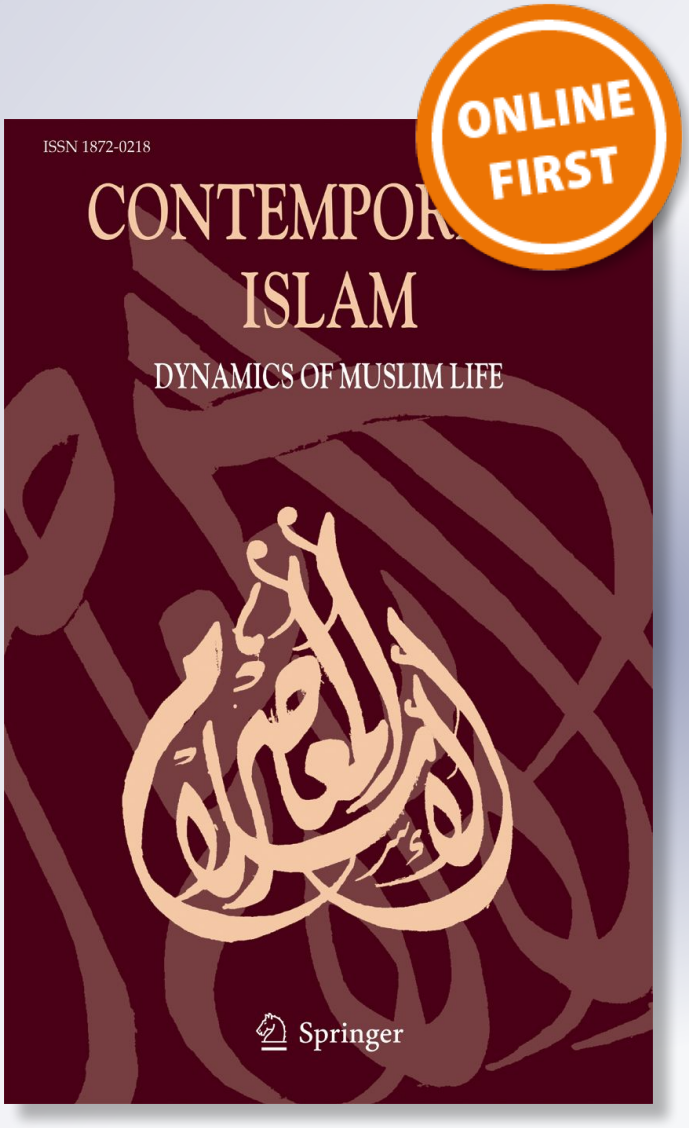

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Da'wa and politics: lived experiences of the female Islamists in Indonesia

Ai Fatimah Nur Fuad[1]

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Abstract

Stories about women activism in the Tarbiyah movement in Indonesia has gained scholarly attention. The existing literatures, however, tend to focus on the official discourses. This article discusses female members' everyday experiences within the the *liqo* activity, as part of the Tarbiyah movement (circle of religious teaching). It examines the extent to which *liqo* members experience, receive, and practice the *da'wa* ideology designed by the Tarbiyah movement. It focuses on cadres' stories about the lived experiences they have had through joining the *liqo*, with special reference to the female *liqo* group in Jakarta. Using ethnographic approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with 26 female *liqo* members from a total of 45 interviewees and 15 observations of the *liqo* sessions. The study concludes that although the official form of religiosity, piety and political identity have been promoted by the Tarbiyah movement and its leaders, the experiences and practices of women revealed a heterogeneity and complexity of meanings of being in the *liqo*. This study attempts to contribute to the existing analysis of the *da'wa* (Islamic preaching and mission) and politics of a contemporary female Islamist movement with a case study of the Indonesian Tarbiyah movement.

Keywords *Liqo* · Tarbiyah movement · *da'wa* · Women · Islamism

Introduction

Islamism is a modern political ideology that emerged as a new phenomenon during the twentieth century (Roy 2004; Mandaville 2007, 2014). Islamism is a response to the formation of secular nation-states that emerged in postcolonial Muslim countries, replacing the Islamic dynasty and Islamic imperium in the period after Western

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colonialism (Mandaville 2007). Thus, Islamism is a direct political response to the specific context of encounter with Western modernity (Mandaville 2007, 2014). Conflict between Islam and the West has been a defining response to modernity for many Islamist movements and thinkers. In the Twentieth century, Islamist movements came to represent ideological opposition to the influence of other Western 'isms', such as liberalism, Zionism, and secularism. One concept that has been particularly important in articulating this Islamist critique of the impact of modernity is *ghazwul fikri* ('the invasion of ideas') (Hirschkind 2009).

For Islamist movements, the increasing global hegemony of Western culture (as well as its continuing economic and political power) is believed to have undermined Islamic culture. Islamists have argued that Western cultural hegemony has attacked Islam and Muslim lives through the mass-media, popular culture such as films and music, and the secular education system (Hirschkind 2009). Islamist activists typically present *da'wa* (Islamic preaching and mission) as a necessity tools to counter the 'dangerous' cultural imperialism of the West. *Da'wa* is seen to be a crucial process to raise consciousness among Muslim on how they can overturn the situation through a religio-political revival. Islamist movement does not only focus on disciplining the self through *da'wa* focused on individual piety, but also (eventually) on creating and controlling public piety via public *da'wa.*[1] This individual piety and public piety have been developed through the *da'wa* of the Tarbiyah movement/PKS in Indonesia.

The Tarbiyah movement in Indonesia has been widely studied by previous scholars (Asyari and Abid 2016; Woodward et al. 2013; Hidayat 2012; Hamayotsu 2011; Hilmy 2010; Platzdasch 2009; Permata 2008). These studies have shown that the discussion are primarily based on official, formal and political party leaders' discourses, resulting in the omission of internal variations within the movement, especially in terms of ordinary members' experiences. In particular, there has been no sufficient research on the concept and ideology of the *da'wa* of the weekly *liqo* sessions as the core *da'wa* activity of the Tarbiyah movement.[2] There are some studies looking at the involvement of women in this Islamist movement (Arimbi 2017; Afrianty 2015; Rinaldo 2008a, b, c, 2013). These works generally discuss women's role in the movement, their political expressions in public life and how they make connections with other Islamic movements. However, such research has paid little attention to ordinary female members' experiences and discourses in the *liqo*. In this article, my attempt is to look at the involvement of ordinary women in the Islamist *da'wa* movement and their lived experiences in the *liqo*.

The research question I seek to discuss in this article is how female *liqo* members experience the weekly *da'wa* session, especially on theme about private religiosity or

[1] By 'individual piety' here scholars typically mean the commitment to perform obligatory rituals such as the five-times-daily-prayers, reciting the Qur'an, fasting in the month of Ramadan, giving alms, and dressing and behaving in an 'Islamic' way. Strengthening individual piety, for the Islamist, is not only an obligation for Muslims, but also aims to protect them from being influenced by Western modernity. The concept of public piety also implies that there may be (often highly contested) attempts at the regulation and standardisation of practices that are regarded by particular constituencies as appropriately 'pious'.

[2] The *liqo* was also called *halaqah* (Arabic for religious circle). The term *liqo* (meeting) and *halaqah* (religious circle) refer to the same weekly religious mentoring developed for the purpose of teaching the religious doctrine and ideology of the Tarbiyah movement. Although the term *halaqah* is mainly used in the Tarbiyah movement's official books, I prefer to use the term *liqo* because my observations and interviews revealed that it is more widely used by the *liqo* community than the term *halaqah*.

piety and political identity. I argue that the lived experiences of the female *liqo* are heterogeneous and complex. Their motivations for joining and become member of *liqo* are not only to improve their religiosity and piety, but also to expand their social networks such as to find new friends, strengthen existing friendships, and as an expression of obedience to their husbands who are mostly movement members or party functionaries. The *liqo* itself is created by the Tarbiyah movement leaders as part of its *da'wa* ideology. Leaders of the Tarbiyah movement is not merely seeking to strengthen its members' *da'wa* ideologies but also to develop their commitments and contributions to the party (PKS). Thus, lessons conveyed at the *liqo* lessons do not only consist of religious content to improve the members' knowledge of Islam, but also political messages to strengthen their political identity and loyalty to the party. Apart from lessons of *aqidah* (belief) and *ibadah* (worship), the lesson of *ghazwul fikri* (ideological conquest) is taught during the *liqo* sessions. The concept of *ghazwul fikri* is perceived by the mentors and trainees as a 'soft' cultural war that is carried out by Western countries (European and American) with the purpose of defeating Muslims. This lesson is taught and promoted to the female members as the teaching that dividing the world into friends and enemies of Islam.

The first section of this article explains the theoretical background of this article such as the concept of lived religion and how it has been used to analyse women religious movement. It will be followed by a discussion on the emergence of the Tarbiyah movement in Indonesia and its relationship with the *liqo* and the PKS. The third section discusses women's *liqo* group activisms based on my fieldwork I did in 2013 and 2017. In this section I will discuss female cadres's view on their conversion to the *liqo* and the motivation that brought them to join the *liqo* circle. In the last section the article explores how female members of *liqo* perceive the religious teachings and political ideology of the *liqo* which include *ghazwul fikri* (invasion of idea), *aqidah* (beliefs), *ibadah* (worship), and *adab* (ethics).

This research is based on an ethnographic approach. I employed qualitative methods of data gathering, particularly in-depth interviews and participant observation during my fieldwork in Jakarta that I conducted twice in 2013 and 2017. In order to elicit diverse responses and perspectives on lived experiential discourses, I interviewed forty-five participants from a range of different positions in the *liqo*-Tarbiyah movement's hierarchy.[3] Ten can be classified as past and present leaders of the *liqo* (top rank), twelve were mentors or *murabbi* of the *liqo* that trained the trainees in the weekly sessions (middle rank), twelve were trainees or *mutarabbi* who regularly joined the *liqo* sessions (lower rank), nine were public scholars who have been engaged with the Tarbiyah movement discourses and two ex-*liqo* trainees who have now left the *liqo* and became outsiders. Of the total forty-five participants, twenty-six were female and nineteen were male. The profile of these participants had confirmed my reviews to the written resources on the movement and the broader literature on global and local Islamism that the activists of almost all the Islamist *da'wa* movements are typically young graduates from non-religious educational backgrounds who were attracted towards studying Islam (Mandaville 2007; Roy 2004; Machmudi 2006; Damanik 2002).

[3] All the participants' names have been changed to preserve confidentiality.

Most of the observations took place in Jakarta during the Jakarta governor election in 2017. I successfully attended about fifteen *liqo* meetings after I managed to approach the key figure in the movement. He granted me access to attend the *da'wa* activities because I am a female Indonesian Muslim who graduated from Al-Azhar University Cairo - the same university where he received his bachelor's degree. During my attendance at a *liqo* group, I observed how the lessons were delivered by the mentor, and how they were received and the extent to which they were put into practice by the trainees. Each meeting ran for a length of 2 to 4 hours in the trainees' (*mutarabbi*) homes. The observations were more difficult than the interviews in terms of approaching people and gaining their trust through attending their 'exclusive' weekly *liqo*. During my fieldwork, I also attended a range of PKS *da'wa* training events (*daurah*), which included: a) *daurah* (training) on 'the evaluation of the Jakarta governor election', b) *daurah* on Islamic entrepreneurship and Islamic economy, and 3) *daurah* on Islamic leadership.[4] Apart from the weekly *liqo* and *daurah* sessions, I spent time interacting with the trainees outside these sessions as well, such as I responded to their invitation to join their daily and non-formal activities such as visiting a female member who was hospitalized and visiting a sick family member (son) of a female trainee. These visit helped me in understanding their background, everyday feelings and experiences of these women.

Everyday lived religion and women in religious movements

The everyday aspects of the women in the *liqo* of the Tarbiyah movement can be explained with reference to the concept of lived religion. This relates especially to the experience of women involved in pious movements such as the women in the *liqo* which is still framed by the more formal religious and political agendas designed by the leaders of the formal political party, the PKS. A key argument of this article is that the lived experiences of ordinary members is neglected in previous studies of the Tarbiyah movement/PKS. Reviewing the literature on contemporary Islamic movements, I saw the importance of providing a more balanced perspective on official discourses about *da'wa* by researching the more informal lived experiences of members.[5] The intention of this article is not to reject the findings and conclusions of studies concerned with formal, official, and institutionalised forms of *da'wa*, but to look at them together with a

[4] The *daurah* is one of the religious programmes run by the PKS under the umbrella of the Tarbiyah movement. The *daurah* programme also relates to the *liqo*, as both are used for spreading the Tarbiyah messages of *da'wa.* This is shown by the lessons in the *daurah* and *liqo*, which are mixed together in one manual book, called *Manhaj* Tarbiyah (2003, 2005). During my observation, however, I discovered that these two programmes have differences, especially in terms of their audiences and lessons. The audiences taught through the *daurah* are larger than those of the *liqo*. The audience of the *daurah* can also be of mixed gender, including both male and female Tarbiyah activists, and there are no limitations about which members (all levels in the *liqo*) can attend. The *daurah* lessons also cover larger and more up-to-date materials and agendas, including issues arising in the elections, other political discourses, and developing members' skills. Thus, *daurah* can be seen as being more concerned with issues relating to public life than the *liqo* is.

[5] Other scholars also recognized the growing focus on the practices of religion in everyday life, which is becoming increasingly attractive in the broader field of the social sciences (see Hunt 2014; Kersten 2014; Jeldtoft 2011; Devine and Deneulin 2011). They explored the 'everyday' religion from various perspectives and different contexts such as Schielke, S & Debevec, L. (eds.), 2012.

study of informal everyday lived *da'wa* and to describe and analyse some of the tensions therein. The aim is thus to provide a more balance and complete picture of this Islamist *da'wa* movement in Indonesia from the perspectives of members' 'everyday' and 'lived religion'.

Among the pioneers of the concept of 'everyday' and 'lived religion' in the sociology of religion are Nancy T. Ammerman and Meredith McGuire. Neither has been concerned with the study of Muslim societies. Nevertheless, not unlike the Anthropology of Islam, Ammerman (2014) points out that studying the perceptions of members of organisations aims to listen to their daily experiences. For Ammerman, researching the everyday means privileging "the experience of non-experts" (2007:5). Thus the perspective of lived religion helps researchers to build an understanding of the multi-layered nature of religious movements and the everyday realities of its members (Ammerman 2014). In line with Ammerman's argument, Berglund (2014), who has studies Muslims in Europe, also highlights that discussing only official discourses presents Islamic movements as stereotypical monolithic institutions, with all who belong to such movements having the same perspectives and attitudes. Everyday religion has been characterized by researchers as privatized religion and spirituality (Bellah et al. 1996; Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Hamberg 2009). Spirituality is 'often characterized as individualistic, pragmatic and with a strong focus on autonomy and the personal experience as opposed to religious authority and fixed traditions' (Jeldtoft 2011:1137).

Sociologist of religion McGuire invokes the concept of 'lived religion' in her work, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*, to research "religion as expressed and experienced in the lives of individuals" (2008:3). McGuire (2008:11) has suggested one way of looking at everyday forms of religion, which focuses on the religiosity of individuals. She aims to distinguish "the actual experience of religious persons from the prescribed religion of institutionally defined beliefs and practices", focusing on religion "as practiced, experienced and expressed by ordinary people" (McGuire 2008:12). Lived religion as explained by Ammerman and McGuire is, in particular, the embodied and enacted forms of religion and spirituality that occur in everyday life. Dwelling on women's experiences, McGuire argues that religiosity and gender self-identity are expressed and transformed in an ongoing process of mind-body-spirit practice. She shows that "concrete body practices are involved in how gendered selves are socially developed, maintained, and changed throughout life" (McGuire 2008:182).

Thus, gender roles and identities in society are reproduced (and contested) in large part through the enactment of norms through bodily practices. These practices are defined by making sense in everyday life while at the same time contributing to the production of people's identities and sense of belonging (McGuire 2008:46). Thus, modern religious groups often ask their members to commit to developing "new" selves in related ways (no matter how this process is understood –for instance as 'spirituality', 'healing', 'conversion', etc): "all religious groups (at least for some members) promote a measure of transformation of self toward a spiritual ideal" (2008:172). McGuire gives examples of movements requiring members to wear uniform clothing, assume certain gestures and so on to diminish the old or affirm the new self. So, for many who join a religious movement and desire or experience such personal transformation, new religious and spiritual practices may also be key pathways to new gender roles and literally becoming a new kind of person.

As McGuire (2008) puts in her book "Lived Religion", individuals' religious experiences, expressions, and practices are complex and dynamic.[6] Schielke and Debevec (2012) also recognize that, 'the everyday practice of religion is multifarious, ambivalent, and frequently incongruous'. I agree with McGuire that "at the level of individual, religion is not fixed, unitary, or even coherent" (2008:12), and this means that it is impossible to understand individuals' religiosity and identity based only upon the official viewpoint of the organisations of which they are members. Hence, the challenge is to illuminate how individuals and social groups make sense of the complexities of everyday life and what the significance of religious beliefs and practices in different settings and contexts (Hunt 2014).

Mahmood's (2005) study of the women's mosque movement in Egypt shows its relevance with my study that being pious means adherence to norms of religiosity especially through the performance of acts of worship (*ibadah*), attention to Islamic dress and other ways of practicing Muslim self-identity. However, McGuire's work tends to focus on Western women and more individualistic forms of lived religion and spirituality at some distance from official religion. Paying more attention to the relationship between the latter and the former in the context of Muslim societies, Saba Mahmood's (2005) work, *Politics of Piety; the Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject*, studies women in the mosque movement in modern Egypt, taking inspiration from debates about performativity in Feminist studies and applying them to the Anthropology of Islam (cf. Butler 1997; Asad 1986). The women she studied seek to transform themselves by donning more modest dress and more concealing veils, by praying frequently, by attending all-female religious sessions in mosques where they are exhorted to adhere to Qur'anic teachings and to act in line with the will of Allah. According to these Egyptian women, the performance of ritualized behavior is one among a continuum of practices that serve as the necessary means to the realization of a pious self.[7] Thus, disciplining and training their bodies through everyday practices is considered as the most effective way to transform their identity. Compared to McGuire's study on women in mixed and 'unofficial' religious contexts within the context of liberal America, Mahmood's ethnographic account of the lives of pious Salafi-oriented women in contemporary Egypt is closer to my study of the Tarbiyah women. Thus, this study explores and reveals the *da'wa* ideologies and practices within the *liqo* of the Tarbiyah movement as they understood, experienced and performed by its female members.

The emergence of *Liqo* and its relationship with Tarbiyah movement and PKS

Although according to leaders of this movement it emerged in 1983, the history of the Tarbiyah Movement is actually can be traced back to 1968, when the Indonesian

[6] McGuire uses the term 'lived religion' for "distinguishing the actual experiences of religious persons from [the] prescribed religion of institutionally defined beliefs and practices" (2008:12). She highlights the idea that an "individual's lived religion is experienced and expressed in everyday practices – concrete ways of engaging their bodies and emotions in being religious" (2008: 208).

[7] Mahmood (2005)'s performativity has also used to understand the Tablighi Jama'at women in Indonesia and its self-transformation to be pious women (see Amrullah 2011).

Islamic *Da'wa* Council (*Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia*, DDII) focused their efforts on *da'wa* programs in university campuses through a program called *Bina Masjid Kampus* (Campus-Mosque Building) and organised *da'wa* training called *Latihan Mujahid Dakwah* (LMD).[8] During the 1970s and 1980s, students interested in religious mentoring or training actively held informal small study circles, called *liqo or halaqah*. Most circles were held in mosques located in 'secular' universities such as the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) and The Bogor Institute of Agriculture (IPB).[9] These were the starting points and epicentres of the Tarbiyah Movement. The *liqo* were initially focused on improving the private piety of individuals but they also attempted to develop more public agendas to Islamise society and the state.

The Tarbiyah movement emerged during a period of the state repression of Islamists. In the late 1970s, the New Order regime attempted to restrict Islamic groups from having public political roles.[10] The regime also prohibited students from holding religious teaching and *da'wa* sessions in the public sphere. As a result of such government policy, the *da'wa* activities of both Islamic groups and leaders went 'underground'. Under the later period of Soeharto's rule (who ruled from 1966 to 1998), there were also movements and figures that promoted and spread liberal Islam such as *gerakan pembaharuan* or the 'renewal movement' which was led by Nurcholish Madjid ('Cak Nur'). Through this movement, he rejected primordial Muslim politics with his famous slogan "Islam yes, *Partai* Islam, no!". Other figures are Gusdur, who, with his traditionalist background, influenced many younger generations of NU with his liberal Islam, and Munawir Syadzali (a former Minister of Religious Affairs), who, with his "re-actualisation" agenda, emphasized the need for contextual interpretation of Quranic verses. These 'liberal' ideas were rejected in former Masyumi circles by activists who later became key leaders of DDII (Saleh 2004; Platzdasch 2009). These ideas were not acceptable to the *Tarbiyah* Movement and led them to keep struggling against such ideas through their *da'wa* activities, mainly through the *liqo*.

Islamism emerged more visibly in Indonesia in the 1980s and 1990s, through the Tarbiyah movement and other competing Islamist movements. This was also a decade of very public re-Islamisation of Muslim public spheres worldwide, for example in terms of events such as the Iranian revolution (1979) and the Afghan jihad against the Russians, as well as the global spread of Wahhabi and Salafi ideology through Saudi-sponsored organisations and publications (Meijer 2009; Mandaville 2007/2014; Wiktorowicz 2006; Burgat 2003). Apart from this context, the emergence of the *Tarbiyah* Movement was also influenced by the ideologies of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (MB) that travelled to Indonesia through the translated works of its founders and ideologues. The ideologies of the MB were also promoted and

[8] The DDII founded and led by Natsir (previously leader of *Masyumi*). Natsir provided an infrastructure for university students to manage their religious teaching and *da'wa* activism (see Kahin 2012).

[9] The Tarbiyah movement in Indonesia, like Islamism in other countries, emerged and grew mainly in big cities as a response to social change and emerging political opportunities (cf. Wiktorowicz 2004; Fox 2012). Campus mosques in secular universities became the central hub of this activism with the main activity being the weekly study circle (*liqo* or *halaqah*).

[10] The regime banned the *Masyumi*, considering it as having an agenda for formalising *shari'a* that challenged the modern secular nation-state and issued the policy of NKK (*Nomalisasi Kehidupan Kampus* or Normalisation of campus lives) (see Effendyi 2003).

disseminated by the Middle Eastern graduates who later became elites of the *Tarbiyah* Movement, such as Salim Segaf and Hidayat Nur Wahid.

The Tarbiyah movement then developed and consolidated when Soeharto sought to recognise Islamic organisations in the public sphere in an effort to shore up his legitimacy during the final period of his government – from 1989 to 1998. The changing political climate and a more democratic state in the post-New Order era from the end of 1998 encouraged the emergence in the public sphere of various revivalist Islamic groups[11] and new Islamic political parties based on revivalist ideologies.[12] In this context, the emergence of a democratic state was also seen by the Tarbiyah movement as an opportunity for strengthening and expanding its *da'wa* movement beyond the private to the public sphere and the state domain. Therefore, they established a formal political party named the Justice Party or *Partai Keadilan* (PK) in Jakarta in 1998. Then, they changed its name into The Prosperous and Justice Party or *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS) in 2004 (see Machmudi 2006; Damanik 2002).[13]

The decision to establish the party caused the Tarbiyah movement's orientation to combine a focus on strengthening the individual piety of its cadres and more actively attracting wider constituencies. Since the 2004 general election, in particular, the party has attempted to attract wider audiences by campaigning on 'secular' social justice issues (Platzdasch 2009). It has focused more on education for poor people, anti-corruption and clean governance, instead of the formalisation of *shari'a* (Islamic law) and the other Islamic identity issues that were central to their campaign in the previous election (1999) (Permata 2008; Muhtadi 2012). The party even declared itself to be a pluralist party by accommodating non-Muslim members and promoting them as candidates for parliament (Platzdasch 2009).[14] This 'shifting' political pragmatism disappointed some of the cadres of the *Tarbiyah* movement and has led to internal debates and tensions between key figures. According to Permata (2008, 2013) these disappointment and tension happened because the mixed between two different characters of organisations; the Tarbiyah movement which is more religiously purist and informal, and the party which is more pragmatic and formal.

I argue that the interests and goals of the Tarbiyah movement and the party (PKS) are, to some degree, intertwined. The Tarbiyah movement is still focused on strengthening the individual piety of its members, but it has started to become involved in mobilising the members of the movement to support the party's goal. Therefore, the *da'wa* of the Tarbiyah movement after the establishment of the party (including the *liqo*), has a mixed focus on both developing individual piety and mobilising the cadres for more formal political purposes, such as recruiting party cadres, disseminating party policies, and involving members in electoral grassroots campaign for gaining political

[11] Such as the Islamic Defender Front (FPI), the Hizbut Tahrir of Indonesia (HTI), and the Forum of Communication of Ahlussunnah Wal-Jama'ah (FKAWJ) (see Hilmy 2010; Hasan 2012; Jamhari and Jahroni 2004)

[12] The Crescent Moon Party (PBB) and New Masyumi Party) were founded following the liberalisation of the Indonesian political system, which guaranteed people's rights to establish parties and social organisations (see Platzdasch 2009; Mietzner 2009).

[13] The PK "rebranded' and changed its name to the Prosperous Justice Party (PKS) in 2004 because as the PK it had failed to meet the electoral threshold requiring all parties to get more than 2% of national votes. In the 1999 election, the PK only got 1.7%.

[14] We can also see this attempt in the case of the MB in Egypt who accommodated Christians. The MB has also formed electoral alliances with nationalists, secularists and liberals (see Leiken and Brooke 2007).

positions in the parliament, government and other public positions. Due to its present position as a political party within a democratic state, the PKS has publicly adopted pragmatic policies on religious pluralism, human rights and so on. These commitments have displaced the party's commitment to establishing *shari'a* governance – something that the Tarbiyah community has sought since its outset. This recalls Wiktorowicz's (2006) distinction (and tensions) between (Salafi) 'politicos' and 'purists'. For instance, in the *liqo*, I saw how the trainees expressed their 'disappointment' at being required to participate in the 'grassroots' election campaigning process. This turned them into 'human resources' who devoted their time to simple practical tasks for the party (such as handing out pamphlets), rather than the lessons of the *liqo*. As a result, the Tarbiyah female members actively involved in the weekly *liqo* sessions have found themselves in a dilemma. On the one hand, they have to be committed to being assertive on the importance of Islamising individuals, whilst on the other they have become subordinate to the political interests of the party.

A female *Liqo* group in Jakarta

Each *liqo* is a small training cluster consisting of six to ten trainees held under the supervision of a mentor or trainer. As the *liqo* lessons (*mawad* [pl.], *madah* [sing.]) revolve around Tarbiyah ideology, the trainee of the *liqo* is called a *mutarabbi* (a male trainee) or *mutarabbiah* (a female trainee), while the mentor or trainer is called a *murabbi* (a male mentor) or *murabbiah* (a female mentor). The *liqo* is designed for single gender classes, with male and female *liqo* groups being segregated. Gender segregation is typical of almost all *da'wa* movements among modern Islamists.[15] An interview with a senior mentor in Pondok Aren-Tangerang revealed that *liqo* mentors are advised to recruit trainees from their neighbourhood areas. Arifin added that all trainees in his *liqo* group live in Pondok Aren or Ciputat – two districts that are very close to each other.[16] This guideline aims to make it easier for both trainers and trainees to attend their routine meetings. The *liqo* sessions are conducted every week, with the day and time of the sessions being discussed and chosen by the trainees *(mutarabbi*) in conjunction with the mentor (*murabbi*) of each *liqo* group based on their availability. However, sessions are commonly arranged for weekends, as the majority of both trainees and trainers are young working men and women. The *liqo* is scheduled to last 2 hours, and can be run in the morning, afternoon, or evening, again depending on each group's preferences.

Although the official texts stipulate that the *liqo* sessions must remain small to allow intensive learning and indoctrination, together with routine individual assessment of the trainees by their mentors (DPP PKS 2005), in reality this depends on each situation and each mentor. The official *Manhaj* Tarbiyah book says that each *liqo* group should hold six-ten trainees, but the trainees and mentors that I interviewed told me that the number of trainees in a group is not always in this range. For instance, four *liqo* mentors said

[15] These include Al-Muhajirun in the UK (Wiktorowicz 2005), Salafis and the MB in Jordan (Wiktorowicz 2001), the mosque or piety movement in Egypt (Mahmood 2005), and the Hizb al-Tahrir (Taji-Farouki 1996).
[16] Pondok Aren and Ciputat are two districts in the city of South Tangerang in Indonesia. Both districts are located very close to ('inside') the greater Jakarta metropolitan area, on the border area between Jakarta and Tangerang.

that the number of trainees in their groups varies between eight-twelve. Ridho, one of male mentor who leads a *liqo* group in the district of Bekasi, says: 'In regard to the restriction issue, I think it is hard to restrict the number of *liqo* trainees when there are many requests to join. As they want to learn about Islam from us, it is difficult for us [mentors] to reject them'. Ranti, another female mentor said that she is flexible about the number of trainees that she accepts in a *liqo* group when it is formed because three to five trainees usually drop out after the *liqo* meetings have run for a few weeks as their commitment is not strong enough. My interviews suggested that this often happens, as individuals do not know exactly what the lessons given in the *liqo* involve until they experience them.[17] Nevertheless, the small number of trainees per group produced by the restrictions on *liqo* group size are broadly adhered to, and enable mentors and trainees to pass on and receive *liqo* messages effectively.[18] Rahima, a young female mentor, argues that:

> The *liqo* is different from other *pengajian* (religious learning or lecturing groups) such as *Majelis Ta'lim*, particularly in terms of its audience and its effectiveness.[19] The *Majelis Ta'lim* is attended by more than 20 people, so it tends to be one-way speaking. Unlike the *Majelis Ta'lim*, the audience of the *liqo* is very limited, to an audience of about 6 to 10 persons. This causes the learning conditions [to be] more effective and interactive. It means that the study is not a one-way process in which the audience are discouraged to ask and express their ideas. In a small group, the audience are more comfortable in asking questions. The mentors are also encouraged to stimulate the audience to raise questions and to be involved in a discussion.

My observations of the women's *liqo* group that I joined shown that *liqo* groups typically consist of trainees and a mentor from a local neighbourhood area. During my observations, I was allocated by my respondent (a female senior mentor or *murabbiyah*) to a *liqo* cluster whose members were comprised of people from a neighbourhood in the district of Pondok Aren, near Jakarta. In its first session, my *liqo* group was composed of nine women within an age range of approximately 26–42 years.[20] However, two of the group left after the first two *liqo* sessions.[21] The initial group was made up of seven married women, who all had children, and two unmarried women. Five of the trainees were working women, three were housewives, and one

[17] To me, this seems to represent a kind of *da'wa* strategy, which I refer to as '*da'wa* by deception', as the activists try to influence the people they are approaching but hide their real intentions and beliefs. They do not reveal their religious views or their *da'wa* until they feel confident that the individuals they are approaching are interested in learning about Islam through the *liqo* sessions.

[18] Restrictions on the number of trainees (*mutarabbi*) in religious circles are also used in the Egyptian MB (Mitchell 1993).

[19] *Pengajian* (Indonesian) is a religious learning group whose members specifically learn about the Qur'an, Sunna and other key Islamic subjects. *Pengajian* is usually attended by more than twenty people. It currently has several names, including *majlis ta'lim* (learning session).

[20] A similar number of *liqo* members were also found in other *liqo* groups that my interviewees (who are *liqo* trainees (*mutarabbi or mutarabbiyah*) in Jakarta and other cities such as Tangerang and Bekasi) were members of.

[21] I explain in the next section why these two women left the *liqo*, and only seven trainees thus remained in the group.

was a college student. All of us met at the *liqo* meeting place which was a trainee's house. The majority of the trainees travelled to the weekly *liqo* session on their own motorcycles, whilst some travelled by car and were either dropped off by their husbands or drove themselves. Two trainees travelled to the *liqo* sessions on public transportation. Our mentor sometimes drove to the *liqo* venue in her private car, and sometimes came on her motorcycle. All the trainees came dressed in soft-coloured long dresses, with thick *kerudung* or *jilbab* (both types of headscarves) covering their neck and extending over their chest. This is the most commonly adhered to Islamic dress code among the *liqo* women's community. My close observations revealed that it is almost impossible to find *liqo* trainees dressing in jeans or cotton trousers and tops, with face make-up or with up-to-date styles of *kerudung* (headscarves).[22] Such clothes are regarded as 'non-Islamic' and as an influence of Westernisation. The absence of *liqo* women activists wearing such clothes or make-up is one of the characteristics of those that the *liqo* lessons attract.[23]

Although the *liqo* sessions are scheduled to last for 2 h, my observations and interviews with my trainees revealed that they usually last much longer than this. The *liqo* that I joined during my fieldwork was conducted every Saturday morning for about 3 h, from 09.00 am until 12.00 pm. The *liqo* was held in the living room of a different trainee's house each week so that the trainees got to know each other and became closer. All of us were relatively new members, and before joining this group none of us had any experiences related to *liqo* lessons or Tarbiyah movement. We met each other at the first *liqo* mentoring session, and each of us joined this group through recommendations from senior mentors that lived in the same district. New mentors (*murabbiah*) are chosen to establish new *liqo* groups by their former mentors, who also manage these new mentors.[24] Given that all trainees are new recruits to the *liqo* network, we were advised to learn basic Islamic topics, such as *shahadat* and other *aqidah* or *tawhid*-related topics. We were given basic topics on Islam because we were classified as beginners in this community, with none of the learning experiences that we had outside the *liqo* being taken into account, and the lessons were delivered in *bahasa* (the Indonesian language). Both my experience of attending the *liqo* and my conversations with members of other *liqo* revealed that it is common to commence the *liqo* sessions with one of the trainees reading two or more selected Qur'anic verses out while the mentor and the other trainees listen. After this, the trainees remain seated on the thinly carpeted floor and listen attentively in silence as the mentor explains the topic for the day. The mentor then relates the topic to everyday life with practical examples, and invites questions from the trainees. A serious atmosphere was maintained throughout the session, with very little joking or chatting.

However, in the *liqo* group that I joined, this silent and serious atmosphere only occurred when none of the trainees brought their children. Most of the *liqo* meetings that I attended were noisy, with children crying and screaming. Consequently, the lessons

[22] My reflection is that this dress code and its performance represent a 'marker of difference' that makes it easy to identify *liqo* women in Jakarta public areas, such as malls or shopping centres, hospitals, street and offices, where their style of dress does not represent the mainstream clothing style for Muslim women.

[23] The *liqo* community have typical perspective on women's dress codes, including the veil and headscarves, and the doctrinal reasoning that lies behind their choices and commitments.

[24] This system of shifting in role from a trainee (*mutarabbi*) to a mentor (*Murabbi*) is employed whenever a new small *liqo* group is established, with trainees always chosen to be new mentors by their *liqo* mentors.

were often stopped for a number of short periods whilst the mothers calmed their children down and got them back playing with their toys or else took them away from the circle. The *liqo* allows mothers to bring their children as it aims to accommodate mothers' responsibilities. The movement believes that women members, just like men, are obliged to attend the weekly *liqo*, and because caring for children is perceived to be the woman's responsibility, it is thus accepted that women must be allowed to bring their children when they attend the *liqo*. My interviews with male *liqo* members and mentors indicated that it is less common for men to bring their children to *liqo* sessions, which indicates that women get little help from their family in looking after their children.

It is common for new recruits to leave their groups when they cannot find what they are looking for. My observations during the 4 months that I attended the *liqo* group confirmed this phenomenon. Two of the nine *liqo* trainees did not come again after the first two sessions, and therefore only seven trainees continued with the weekly meetings. I could see that those who came were very enthusiastic and committed to improving their skill in reciting the Qur'an and to learning other basic Islamic knowledge. Such small 'family' groups are expected to make it easier for mentors to build the ethos of the groups and to discipline each *liqo* trainee. During my observations, however, I rarely found a situation in which the mentor built a good learning environment that encouraged the trainees to raise questions. In many cases, the trainees were passive, and tended to be afraid to express their opinions. Such experiences were supported by the women's statements during the interviews that I conducted with them. Thus, the way the mentors delivered the lessons did not constitute an exploratory approach in which trainees had the opportunity to reflect on their lessons, but was mostly instructive, consisting of guidance to create an ethos of discipline.

Women's conversion to the *Liqo*

As Wiktorowicz (2001:133) argues, "social networks play a critical role in social movement recruitment", and this is also true for the *liqo* movement. Their social networks are mainly built through kinship and personal relationships. Although *liqo* activists target all Muslims, regardless of their backgrounds or organisational affiliations, they see that a prior personal relationship makes it easier to invite individuals to join the movement. Family members, friends, and people living in the same location, like neighbours, are those that are considered as personal relationships. The *liqo* trainees that I interviewed typically cited the 'intervention' of family members or friends who had already joined the *liqo* as the reason for their conversion. Tania, one of the trainees said that she initially joined the weekly *liqo* sessions through being encouraged to attend by her classmate in the *Nurul Fikri* education centre.[25] She shares her story as follows:

[25] The *Nurul Fikri* learning centre is widely associated with the Tarbiyah movement, and was founded by Tarbiyah activists in 1985. The literature and the official website of the centre mentions that their motivation and purpose is to help students to develop their skills in order to enter top state universities after graduating from senior high school (see Damanik 2002). However, I observed that this institution as part of the *da'wa* strategy of the Tarbiyah movement. Evidence for this can be seen in the topics discussed among students of *Nurul Fikri*, the 'typical' books on Islam used by the Tarbiyah movement that are widely circulated among them (such as books written by the key figures of the MB and the PKS) and, of course, in the rules for behaviour and their physical performances of them, which all strongly relate to the Tarbiyah movement.

> In the last stage of my SMA (*Sekolah Menengah Atas*/Senior high School), I joined the *Nurul Fikri* training centre to prepare in pursuing higher education at the University of Indonesia (UI). In this centre I found new close friends as we met every day for about three hours at a minimum to learn various school subjects. I made even closer relationships with my classmate, who invited me to join her 'religious' learning group that later on I knew as *liqo* or *halaqah* group. She said that it is important not to forget religious subjects as well as school subjects, such as Maths, Physics etc.

Rina from West Sumatra – who moved to Jakarta to pursue her Master Degree at a state university, and then worked to earn money to support herself – reported that her older brother who is a figure closely related to the PKS was involved in her decision to join the *liqo*:

> I was initially asked by my brother to attend one of the religious programmes in Bogor, managed by the Tarbiyah community in my new campus. It was a very intensive religious training for one full week. I had to attend the overall programme over the week, and was not allowed to go outside the training venue during the whole week. During the training, I was told that this one-week training was an introductory programme for the potential trainees before they officially join the weekly *liqo* sessions. In my opinion, this training was significant in building my understanding on Islamic teaching, as taught by the Tarbiyah, and it attracted me to attend the regular *liqo* sessions afterwards.

In my opinion, this training represented an important 'indoctrination' phase for Rina, as well as aiming to test her interest and engagement. Although Rina's explanation shows that her decision to join the *liqo* came gradually, it was clearly influenced by the one-week 'indoctrination' training that she attended. This training and experience made her aware of the importance of participating in such an Islamic group, and the advantages she would accrue from doing so. As Snow, Zurcher, and Ekland-Olson contend, "people seldom initially join movements per se; rather, they typically participate in movement activities and only gradually became members" (Snow et al. 1980:795).[26] Moreover, Rina's brother played a very important role, not only in introducing her to the movement, but also in persuading her to participate and to join a group. In this regard, the role of families and friends, or so-called social networks, is to introduce, promote, and persuade potential members to join the movement. Therefore, candidates' decisions about whether they should join or decline are not only influenced by their own considerations, but also by the support, encouragement and 'pressure' of their relatives or friends.[27] This trend will be discussed in further detail below, based on my observations of the women's *liqo* group in which I participated in Jakarta.

[26] See also Clark's discussion in Wiktorowicz (2004:171).

[27] Based on official documents published by the PKS and my interviews with leaders, I found that the 'approaching familiars' strategy, or recruitment through personal relationships, was most used by the *liqo*-Tarbiyah movement during its emergence in the 1980s and through until the 1990s. However, this approach has recently been used in tandem with other 'public' approaches. The leaders of the movement, however, still consider the 'private' recruitment pattern as being more successful than 'public' recruitment in pulling individuals to the *liqo*.

My observation of the women's *liqo* group that I joined during my fieldwork also supported the hypothesis that social networks play a significant role in women's decisions to join the *liqo*. The female *liqo* trainees from my group described the influence exerted by *liqo* members who were husbands, other family members (sisters or brothers), or friends and neighbours on their decision-making. Within my *liqo* group, three female trainees *(mutarabbiah*) were sisters from the same family. During my informal conversation with Mona, one of these three sisters who had graduated from the School of Design at a state university in Solo-Central Java, she explained:

> I come from Central Java for working in Jakarta. My two older sisters have been working here a few years before me. Following my arrival in Jakarta, I saw them every week and came to a religious meeting [the *liqo*]. I think that it would be good for me if I joined them as well. Besides learning religious subjects, I can also find new friends from this meeting. So, three of us gathered in one *liqo* group. However, not too long after I joined this *liqo*, one of my sisters moved to another *liqo* group in a different part of Jakarta following her husband.

A female trainee named Fathya said that she attended a *liqo* group in the Pondok Aren-Tangerang district through an invitation from her friend and neighbour. Such experiences were not unique to Rina, Tania, and Fathya, but were shared by my other interviewees, who were friends or neighbours with one another, or who had *liqo* members in their families before they joined their groups. The interventions of family members, friends, or neighbours that are more senior members in the *liqo* encourages others not only to join, but to 'convert' to the *liqo* perspective or ideology.[28] They 'convert' in the sense that they change their perspective on particular issues in Islam, and shift their daily attitudes or practices to ones that they consider to be superior to those that they held before becoming involved in the *liqo*.

My interviews also revealed that marriages to *liqo* activists have supported the process of conversion to the *liqo* ideology and perspective.[29] For instance, Retno, a *liqo* trainee told me that she was encouraged to attend the *liqo* by her husband, who had been a *liqo* activist since long before they were married, as did Nuriyah, whose husband

[28] The discourse of 'conversion' is common in Western sociology of religion. It does not always involve literal conversion to a different religion, but can often be about changes of ideology, mind, and practice. In Britain, people become 'born again Christians', which refers to a change in their religious beliefs and attitudes and/or practices. In the United States in the 1970s, a growing number of young well-educated people began converting to the 'New Religious Movements (NRMs)' and they were very visible in public places – on the streets – where they sold flowers and candles and invited young people to their centres. The growing trends of conversion amongst young people led to the idea that the trainees of various NRMs were being brainwashed through various techniques. For further discussion of 'conversion' in the Western context see, for instance, Barker (1984). Conversion in the West also includes conversion to Islam, of course. Nehemia Levtzion in "Conversion to Islam (1979)", however, differentiates between conversion and adhesion. Conversion usually involving individuals in a 'reorientation of the soul' and in a commitment to a new way of life and adhesion typically a communal process entailing 'the acceptance of new worship as useful supplements and not as substitutes" to what went before. Thus according to Levtzion:'Islamisation of a social or ethic group is not a single act of conversion but a long process toward greater conformity and orthodoxy' (1979: 21). In my opinion, the discourse of conversion is similar to the spirit of *da'wa* in Islam, which aims to make the beliefs and practices of Muslims better, and includes the *da'wa* of the Tarbiyah movement/the PKS in Indonesia. See, for instance, Poston (1992) and Janson (2003).

[29] See also Asyari and Abid (2016) on how the Tarbiyah movement expanding its network through marriage.

is a PKS functionary and a senior mentor of the *liqo*. Two other female interviewees, Tania and Nisya also told me that their husbands who are also the PKS functionaries had been involved in their conversion to the *liqo* perspective.[30] These stories suggested to me that these women's 'conversions' to *liqo* beliefs and practices were not merely driven by their own free choices, but also by the encouragement and advice of their husbands. Both encouragement and advice can be difficult for Indonesian wives to refuse, particularly those who come from rural backgrounds, lack of educational experience and limited economic access, where husbands have stronger voices and wives are expected to follow their instructions, especially on religious matters. Close observations and informal conversations with these female *liqo* activists revealed that there is a growing trend of family 'conversion', in which husbands that have already adopted the *liqo* perspective transmit it to their wives.

liqo activists expose their families and friends to the religious lessons taught in the *liqo* through their everyday interactions with them. The interviewees said that the process that their friends and family used to approach them was straightforward, involving informal discussions about Islam. In many cases, various religious issues were discussed, and the *liqo* activists took the opportunity to explain their *liqo* perspectives on Islam. They made Islam a common topic of their daily conversations, discussing it in public places, whilst having lunch at the office, or during social visits. The conversations about religious issues were reported as being more intense by trainees that were converted by family living in the same house. This is partly because a sister or a brother who has either younger or older siblings has many chances to discuss Islam with them – whilst cooking and eating dinner, watching television, or talking before bed-time.

The female reception to the *liqo* lessons

During the weekly *liqo* sessions, the mentors (*murabbi/murabbiah*) are required to follow the guidance from the official curricula of the *liqo,* called the *Manhaj* Tarbiyah.[31] This curriculum is the main reference point, particularly for the *liqo/halaqah*, and also other *da'wa* and religious training related activities such as *dawrah* or *taujih* (religious lectures), *mabit* (reciting the Qur'an overnight), praying and thinking of Allah (*dhikr)* and *mukhayam* (religious camps).[32] The book is designed for training and teaching all different levels of trainees within the *liqo* of the Tarbiyah movement.[33] The *Manhaj* Tarbiyah explains the three key contents of the book, namely *madah* (subject or lesson), *sarana*

[30] The role of husband in converting their wife into a religious movement has also revealed by Amrullah (2011). She found that women she studied joined the Indonesian Tablighi Jama'at to obey their husbands' commands.

[31] This book, first published in 2005, contains 566 pages, and is one of the PKS's key texts on movement ideology. Produced by Media Insani Press, it is managed by the PKS' Division of Cadres. The PKS leadership expects that it will be the key volume used for the instruction and guidance of members in all lessons taught among the Tarbiyah cadres. The back cover of the book confirms that the *Manhaj* Tarbiyah is 'developed to be a *da'wa* curricula for cadres' training' (DPP PKS 2005: back cover). One of the Tarbiyah mentors told me, that:"I am very happy to have this book because it contains very detailed curricula, and has learning steps for every stage of the *liqo*".

[32] Further elaboration on Tarbiyah movement activities such as *mukhayam, mabit*, etc., see Salman 2006.

[33] Levels of the trainees are; the beginner level (*Kader Pemula*), youth level (*Kader Muda*), intermediate level (*Kader Madya*), mature level (*Kader Dewasa*).

(methods of teaching) and *maraji'* (literature or texts used as key sources for each subject). Lessons such as *aqidah* (faith/theological doctrines), *fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) and *akhlak* (ethics) in the *Manhaj* Tarbiyah are similar to those in the curricula of most Islamic educational organisations such as Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah.[34] However, the aims and references given for the subjects frame the text differently.[35]

This is also the case in the subject of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence). Firstly, it focuses on purification issues typical of Salafists (cf. Meijer 2009); this is mentioned in its purpose "to avoid any *bid'ah* (innovation) in each *ibadah* that is not taught by the Prophet" (DPP PKS 2005: 82–83).[36] Topics in this subject area also discuss how to dress and behave in an Islamic fashion, aiming to reject the Western dress and Western lifestyle that hugely influences Indonesian Muslims, especially the urban youth. For women, wearing a headscarf and avoiding mixing with males in a class or a common room (*ikhtilath*) are some of the issues taught. In the subject of *akhlak* (morality) is also found a similar tone. In general, this subject covers various topics such as attitudes to fellow Muslims, fulfilling promises, and other related topics. For instance, there is a topic emphasizing that Tarbiyah members should not make friends with those who have a 'bad personality'. This means 'those whose way of life is not in accordance with Islam, enemies of Islam, and *kafir* (an infidel)' (DPP PKS 2005:111). Based on my own observations, this topic is also often referred to in supporting the movement's harsh attitudes to those who hold liberal interpretations of Islam. The most distinctive subject in the *Manhaj* Tarbiyah is the subject of *da'wa*.[37] This subject covers *fiqh ad-da'wa, sirah* (Islamic history), the contemporary Islamic world, Islamic reform movements, as well as Comparative Religions and Sects.[38] The key content of this subject area is the

[34] Furthermore, the texts (*maraji'*) used for teaching these subjects are mainly the works of *ulama* and ideologues whose backgrounds and orientations link closely to the Islamist ideas of the MB in Egypt and related movements. Some of those cited most routinely are: Sa'id Hawa (1935–1989) (*Al-Islam*), Abdul Karim Zaidan (1917–2014) (*The Principles of Da'wa*), Mawdudi (1903–1979) (*Islamic Principles*), Yusuf Al-Qaradawi (b.1926) (*Characteristics of Islam*), Abdullah Muslih and Shalah al-Ashmawi (*Islamic Principles for Life*), and Abu Bakar al-Jazairi, *(The Guidance of Muslims' Lives)*. Thus, repeated reference to the works of these Islamist ideologues in the *liqo* constructs an ideological framing that connects the leadership, mentors and members of the Tarbiyah movement to the global Islamist movement in general and the MB in particular. Although most of these references in the *Manhaj* Tarbiyah are mentioned by name in Arabic, the movement typically uses translations of the originals in Indonesian for teaching and learning. This indicates that only a small number of the *liqo* community knows Arabic. Moreover, Arabic is not taught much and even mentors do not necessarily know Arabic.

[35] Under the subject of *aqidah*, for instance, the trainees are expected: "1) to understand the comprehensiveness of Islam compared to other religions; 2) to believe that Islam is a perfect way of life; and 3) to fully accept and obey Islam so as not to practice any other way of life except Islam" (DPP PKS 2005: 46). This emphasizes that Islam is a complete doctrine and way of life including social, economic, and political as well as religious dimensions in the style of classic statements of Islamist ideology. Again in a style typical of classic Islamism, it also draws sharp boundaries between Muslims and others, warning Tarbiyah members not to adopt other ways of life.

[36] All quotations from these texts (*Manhaj* Tarbiyah) were all my own translations and not those of the authors.

[37] *Da'wa* is part of a traditional education in Indonesia taught in both traditional and modern schools. *Da'wa* in these schools is taught in a general sense for nurturing Islamic virtue among its students. However, in the hands of modern Islamist *da'wa* activists such as the Tarbiyah movement, this subject has a new significance and a more powerful meaning as an active *da'wa* particularly focused on rejecting Western culture and strengthening weakened Islamic identities.

[38] Through this lesson, the trainees are expected: (1) to understand factors that led to the weakness of Muslims and make every effort to solve the problem; 2) to understand the role of Tarbiyah (education) and *harakah* (movement) in solving this problem; and 3) to believe that the only way to solve this problem is through joining the *Hizbullah* (warrior of Allah), that is through joining the Tarbiyah movement (DPP PKS 2005: 161–173).

concept of *ghazwul fikri* (invasion of idea or ideological conquest). It is the core ideology of the Tarbiyah movement and frequently expressed in the text of the *Manhaj* Tarbiyah. One of the issues explained in terms of *ghazwul fikri* is the issue of 'the enemies of Islam'.[39]

Women's reception to the concept of ghazwul fikri

In regard to the female *liqo*'s receptions of *ghazwul fikri* (*al-ghazwa al-fikri*, invasion of idea or ideological conquest), my interviews with the majority of the leaders revealed that the idea of *ghazwul fikri* is seen as having an important role for members of the *liqo*, in all levels.[40] Siti, one of the female mentor (*murabbiah*) of my *liqo* group contended that Muslims' enemies find it easier to contaminate the Muslim faith through importing Western culture, adding that "when Muslims adopt a Western culture, it indicates that Muslims have been implicitly defeated by the West".[41] Siti's opinions emerged when she provided examples of 'Western' phenomena in contemporary Indonesian culture, such as in women's fashion and behaviours and attitudes in public places that regarded as 'un-Islamic or less-Islamic', for example the relationship of young male and female Muslims and their impolite attitudes to older people. Such perceptions are commonly found amongst revivalists and Islamists, who believe that Muslims should avoid imitating non-Muslim culture and worry that the cultural domination of the West will make them lose their 'authenticity' and identity as 'true' Muslims. From my own observations as well as my informal conversations with the mentor and all trainees from my *liqo* group, I found that the West is considered to be a potential enemy of Islam. In several *liqo* sessions that I attended, the mentor used *ghazwul fikri* to construct and define Western culture and politics as a threat. The *murabbiah* perceived *ghazwul fikri* to be an unconventional type of war – a 'soft war' – that the enemies of Muslims adopted because they could not defeat them in a physical war.

For this reason, even though the content of *ghazwul fikri* is related to Westernisation, the mentor often connected the issue with Zionism instead. Unfortunately however, my mentor, like other senior *liqo* members, failed to clearly explain how or why Zionism

[39] The purposes of this subject as written in the text are that the trainees are able: 1) to recognize various groups or organizations that aim to destroy Islam from both inside or outside Islam, 2) to understand the purposes, strategies and activities of these organizations, and 3) to explain the danger of these organizations to Muslim fellows and to respond to these organizations effectively (*Manhaj* Tarbiyah 2005:545–546). Key literature (*maraji'*) used for this subject are *Ghazwul fikri* (Hasan al-Banna), *Ghazwul fikri* (Mawdudi), *70 years of Ikhwanul Muslimin* (Yusuf al-Qaradawi), *Invasi Pemikiran* or *the Invasion of Thought* (Abdus Sattar), *Du'at la Qudhat/Preachers not Judges* (Hasan al-Hudaibi), and *Manhaj Haraky* (Mustafa Munir Ghadban).

[40] During my observation at the women's *liqo* group, the issue of *ghazwul fikri* was often raised by the mentor, and used to analyse any topic she was teaching. In interviews with mentors from different and more advanced *liqo* groups, I found that this is something that is done with senior members as well as beginners. This was indicated by the fact that interviewees often responded to my questions by making connections to *ghazwul fikri,* even though I did not ask them about its connection with the topics they were talking about. This suggests that the concept of *ghazwul fikri* has a significant influence on the community of the Tarbiyah movement as a whole.

[41] For those who strongly hold the idea of *ghazwul fikri*, globalization or Westernisation is perceived as a threat. Bruinessen (2013) further explains various forms of Western cultural invasion such as popular music, dance and movies, popular culture and dress styles. Certain religious thought such as liberalism, secularism and the idea of pluralism are included as Western cultural invasion.

has had such a significant influence in constructing Western civilisation and ideology, and it seemed to me that they could not clearly understand why and how Zionism is put into a single package with the West. The mentor of my group believed that Zionism was the agent behind *ghazwul fikri*, and that its purpose is not only to take Palestine from Muslims, but also to defeat Muslims anywhere and everywhere by infiltrating and contaminating their faith, ideology, and culture. The *murabbiah* put it as follows when I interviewed her:

> Zionism is the source of *ghazwul fikri*. Zionism influences the global world (European and American states), not only seeking to control Palestine, but also all Muslim countries. Zionism wants to defeat Muslims by infiltrating our Islamic ideology.

Thus, for the mentor, *da'wa* is seen as necessary for counteracting Western propaganda. She said:" Young Muslims have been exposed to the globalised cultures that are completely far from the teachings of Islam. The changing directions of Muslims can be seen, for instance, in terms of dress, behaviour, and other lifestyles".

This view is typical of the ideas held by Islamists. Similarly, the *murabbiah* also highlighted the conflict between Palestine and Israel, the American invasion of Iraq, and the conflict in Afghanistan or Syiria as examples of Western conspiracies to undermine Muslim power. Through my interviews with mentors and trainees from different *liqo* groups I concluded that this perception is strong among the *liqo* community. The mentor's claims above implicitly suggest that Christians as well as Jews are proponents of Zionism. However, the female mentor of a *liqo* group who I interviewed argued that she does not consider all Jews and Christians to be the enemies of Muslims. She says that the global picture of *ghazwul fikri* – that Muslims should be aware of Zionism – does not mean that all non-Muslims (Jews and Christians) are the enemy of Islam or part of the Zionist movement.[42] This claim is being made in the *liqo* of the beginner level that I participated in. As a new member, I was not allowed to participate in the intermediate or advanced *liqo* level classes. However, through my interviews and interactions with trainees studying at the more advanced levels, I found that they expressed a more flexible understanding of the discourse of *ghazwul fikri.* Their flexibility, however, can be seen as part of the *da'wa* strategy at the public and the state level.

One likely impact of *ghazwul fikri* is that it encourages the female *liqo* trainees to believe that they have enemies that are attempting to separate them from Islamic teachings. This hypothesis was confirmed by the experience of Ridho, one of the *liqo* mentors from Bekasi, who shared his experiences of beginning his *liqo* participation:

> When I was invited to attend a *daurah* at a villa in Gunung Salak-West Java, I got many interesting subjects. The event has opened my mind that Islam is an incredible and honourable religion so that, having been born as Muslims, we have to be happy. From this training, I just realised that Muslims nowadays are in

[42] I heard the claim from other mentor or trainer that the trainees will also be taught other Qur'anic verses clarifying this issue in the next levels of their *liqo* sessions in order to make them not generalise that all of Jews and Christians are the enemy of Islam.

> a dangerous situation. Through the topic of *ghazwul fikri*, I realised that we (Muslims) have a huge enemy who are attacking us softly in many aspects. Let's see the reality. There are many evidences supporting this suspicion. As an example, let us take a look at teenagers here (in Jakarta). Most of them no longer have respect for the Prophet Muhammad. They also do not know their life's aim [based on Islamic teachings].

This testimony fits with the *da'wa* manual's explanation that the purpose of teaching *ghazwul fikri* is to make members aware that there are numerous movements seeking to defeat and harm Muslims. This lesson of *ghazwul fikri* is frequently linked by the mentor to the wider context of wars or conflicts in Muslim lands, Western double-standards and global inequalities –as also written in the *Manhaj* Tarbiyah (2005: 302). Thus, the concept of *ghazwul fikri* was perceived by the mentor and the trainees in this *liqo* group as cleaving people into two groups: 'friends' and 'enemies'. The mentor appealed to such characterisations in order to strengthen the Islamic identities of the *liqo* trainees in an attempt to 'de-westernise' them, both culturally and ideologically. This bifurcation of people and cultures into friends and enemies appears to be driven by the worry that living in a modern society in which Western culture and its values dominate could reduce the commitment that Muslims have to their religion. Thus, this concept of *ghazwul fikri* led female *liqo* community of having such a strong response to public political discourses both in international or national contexts. Although these female *liqo* were not part of the more conventional hard-line groups such as FPI and HTI, they responded to the Ahok case in a very active and even aggressive reaction.[43] Apart from the Ahok case, the female *liqo* community also reacted massively and joined the demonstrations over the conflicts in the global Muslim world such as conflicts in Syiria, Iraq, and Palestine.

Women's reception of Aqidah

Apart from the lesson of *ghazwul fikr*, *aqidah* is also one of the topics taught to the female members in the *liqo*.[44] The *liqo* community believes that the 'true' *aqidah* should refer to the interpretation made by the early generations of Muslims.[45] The *liqo* community perceives the interpretations of the Quran that were made during these periods as being the most authoritative, and regards these three generations of Muslims

[43] Ahok (Basuki Tjahaya Purnama) is a Chinese and Christian former governor of Jakarta (2014–2017) that accused of blasphemy in 2017. He was convicted of blasphemy because of his speech made during his visit/pre-election campaign in September 2016. In his speech, he implied that Muslim leaders were trying to trick Muslim voters by using a Qur'anic verse to argue that Muslim should not vote for a non-Muslim leader. This case sparked protests and demonstration in Jakarta as they believe that Ahok's speech insulted Islam.

[44] The *aqidah* is related to the basis of faith in which Muslims conceptualise their perception of God. For instance, *aqidah* explains the tenet of the oneness of God as *Tawhid* (the unity of God). *Tawhid* is the belief that distinguishes Muslims from non-Muslims, such as Christians, Jews, and Hindus. The importance of this topic is confirmed in statements by *liqo* activists from all levels of seniority. Tifa, one of my participants says:"The materials at the beginning of the *liqo* mostly talk about the very basic and important topics such as *Tawhid* (the concept of the unity of God), *Shahadatain* (the two phrases of the testimony of faith), and *Qada* and *Qadar* (God's determination)".

[45] The three early generations comprising the first generation – the *sahabah* (the Prophet's companions); the second generation – the *tabi'un* (those who lived one generation after the Prophet's companions); and the third generation – the *tabi' at-tabi'in* (the generation after the *tabi'in*).

as being the most committed to Islam. A senior *murabbi*, Abdullah revealed, a "Muslim's faith should be based on the true *aqidah*. We call it *salafiyatul aqidah* – the belief of the *Salaf* people, the early pious companions".[46] For me, this is the factor that appears to lead many people in Indonesia to label the *liqo* community as *Salafi*.[47] Although the *liqo* community rejects this label, they share one common key characteristic with the *Salafi* network – the idea that *aqidah* and rituals are based on these three generations of Muslims. The concept of *aqidah* is also embraced by many Islamic revivalist movements, who purify it by purging it of anything that they consider to comprise 'non-Islamic' belief**.** Thus, by adopting *aqidah,* the *liqo* clearly shows its revivalist character.

The subject of *aqidah* is used to unite the *liqo* community during the *liqo* sessions through the promotion of the concept of 'a true *aqidah*'. A senior mentor who is experienced in leading *liqo* activities said that the distinctive feature that unifies all *liqo* members – from the beginning of its establishment to its current incarnation – is their concept of true *aqidah.* This concept is frequently heard from the Tarbiyah community when they are in the periods of political leader election, particularly during governor or presidential elections. They believe that choosing a governor, a president or other political leaders must be based on the main criteria namely the true *aqidah*. They argue that choosing them based on the true *aqidah* is part of an obligation for Muslims. I observed during two elections of Jakarta Governor (2012 and 2017), and two elections of president (2014 and 2019), the *liqo* community actively engaged in making a public discourses through promoting a candidate that according to them fitted with their criteria of having true *aqidah*.

This concept was also mentioned by the female mentor and the trainees in my *liqo* group not only in relation to political leader campaigns but also in relation to any deviations. They held that the Muslim faith has to be saved from any deviations, arguing that *klenik* (Javanese mysticism) is one such deviation commonly found among Indonesian Muslims.[48] Miya, a female trainee who migrated from a small village in Central Java to Jakarta explained her experience of *klenik's* influence on her family and neighbours in the village:

> The cultural practices in my village are very much coloured by *klenik*. For instance, before the harvest, people must bring *sesajen* (foods provided for God) to the rice field. When a neighbour passes away, we should commemorate him or her with the recitation of '*Laa ilaaha illa-llah*' (there is no god but God) called *tahlilan*, particularly in the 3rd, 7th, and 40th days after their death. Also when there is someone marrying or delivering a new baby in the family, we need to conduct particular traditions. All these occasions should be accompanied by providing certain foods (*sesajen*). Another practice is sort of giving alms, well known as *sedekah punden*, that is arranged once a year. In my village, there is an

[46] *Salaf* is taken from the Arabic root which means 'to precede'. In the Islamic lexicon, this word refers to *al-Salaf al-Salih* – the virtuous companions of the Prophet Muhammad – i.e. the three generations of Muslims that followed the death of the Prophet Muhammad (Rippin 2005).

[47] In an interview that I conducted with a senior *liqo* mentor, he noted that people around him frequently label him and his *liqo* group as the *Salafi*.

[48] For the *liqo* community, *klenik* refers to cultural 'deviations' that influence the Islamic beliefs of Muslims. For other people, *klenik* refers to Javanese mysticism, which is heavily influenced by Hinduism and Buddhism.

> ancestral grave (*makam leluhur*) called *Punden*. People of this village arrange to visit and gather at this grave and bring many main foods and side dishes (*lauk pauk*), pray together (led by a charismatic village leader), and then eat together in this place.

For the *liqo* community, visiting graves and praying for saintly intercessions are both regarded as being close to idolatry. As the leaders of the *liqo* stated, these two 'beliefs' are the main actions for so-called 'grievous crime' (*zulmun 'azimun or zalalun ba'idun*).[49] In addition, the book asserted that these actions "could annul the witness to the faith (*shahadatain*)" (DPP PKS 2005:62). These '*klenik*' cultural practices represent everything that is considered to be un-Islamic by the *liqo* community.[50] The conception of faith (*aqidah*) developed by the *liqo* is very critical of the traditional culture (*klenik*-based) faiths practiced by particular societies in Indonesia. In contrast to the official discourse, Miya states that she disagrees with the *klenik* rituals because of the waste of food they produce. She argues "What I am disappointed with was the fact that the food used for rituals is really *mubadzir* (superfluous or waste of foods), because it is too much and not provided for eating". Miya's expression of her views shows that ordinary members have their own outlooks about why particular traditional rituals are bad for Muslims.

The concept of 'true *aqidah*', as it was taught in my *liqo* group, encouraged the trainees to think that many Muslims in Indonesia practise distorted versions of *aqidah*. Given that the majority of *liqo* trainees, particularly those that I interviewed in my *liqo* group, had only encountered this concept of *aqidah* for the first time at the *liqo* sessions, they were shocked that the religious traditions in their society were not in line with the Islamic faith. A female trainee, share her story as follows:

> When I was studying the topic of *aqidah,* it was so tempestuous (*bergejolak*) indeed. I found that there were so many 'Islamic traditions' that are not fitted with Islamic teachings. Why could our society practice this tradition that is completely contradicted in Islamic teachings?

Miya, a mother of two in her early thirties, had no knowledge of the concept of *aqidah* or the issues surrounding it when she lived in her small town in Central Java. After moving to Jakarta, attending the *liqo* sessions and finding a new community, she was surprised to discover that many of the customs or rituals practised by her relatives and villagers are apparently 'un-Islamic'. The rituals include the ritual of building and entering new houses, ritual of birth, ritual of pregnancy, and ritual of death. She continued her story:

> Furthermore, when reflecting on the issues of *aqidah* in my closest society, I am very sad because it is very far from the tenets of Islam. The sadness increases when I notice that my grandma also strongly believes in un-Islamic

[49] Both are Qur'anic (Q 31:13 and Q 4:60; 116) words that imply the same meaning: "a grievous crime".

[50] The *liqo* community shares common concerns with other revivalist organisations such as the *Muhammadiyah* about *aqidah* being free from *klenik*, and this fits with the core revivalist belief that "the rejuvenation of Islam was to be achieved through a return to the universal core teachings [of Islam], free from distorting influences of socio-cultural innovation" (Mandaville 2007:44).

> traditions. She strongly believes if we do not do certain 'rituals', something bad will be happening. For instance, if she sees a neighbour building his house without a *sesajen* (providing certain services i.e. foods), she will speak that something bad will be happening to their family.[51] I am very sad about her. She is already old and she still believes in this un-Islamic practice. In a month she is very busy to come to her neighbour's rituals and gives 'special' prayers (based on her traditional/cultural beliefs) for any birth, death or any occasion of a family member.

The *liqo* mentors had a strong influence on the female trainees' acceptance of the concept of 'true' *aqidah* (faith) through exemplifying good standards of behaviour and commitment to their Islamic teaching. The female trainees thus saw their *murabbi* as good practitioners of Islam. This commitment to their values is very important for the trust that trainees have in their mentors – perhaps more than other qualities or characteristics such as having a good Islamic education, as a statement from Fadila, a female trainee (*mutarabbi*) at a different *liqo* group suggested:

> The mentors of the *liqo* are very simple. They learn something very basic about Islam, so that they know only little religious knowledge. However, they practised this knowledge in their daily life, for example on learning and practising the five times daily prayers and reading the Qur'an. This is sometimes very different with those who have deep knowledge on religious matters, who do not prioritise implementing their knowledge due to their busyness with other activities.

A similar view was expressed by Nabila, another female trainee – a graduate from an Islamic modern boarding school that had joined a number of different *liqo* both in Indonesia and while she was overseas. She was attracted to the *liqo* lessons because of their practical or applied aspects, stating:" Actually, I did not find new Islamic knowledge from the *liqo* lessons. What I got more was the advantages of the spirit or ethos in implementing the rituals in our daily life".

Sometimes trainees had difficulty in accepting and practicing *aqidah*, especially at the beginning of the courses, as their traditional faiths or cultures clashed with 'the true *aqidah*' offered by the *liqo*. This was more common in trainees who came from rural family backgrounds that were strongly influenced by local traditions. Thus, different trainees have different levels of acceptance, and experience different amounts of resistance to accepting and understanding new information on *aqidah*. During my observations, a range of experiences were communicated by the *murabbiah* and *mutarabbiah* about their parents' rejections of *aqidah.* The parents regarded the *aqidah* as too strict and rigid. However, some parents would gradually understand and come to accept the *liqo*'s concept of 'true' *aqidah.* Thus, these *aqidah* lessons are also sometimes successful in 'converting' trainees' parents as well.

In addition to building Islamic personality or religiosity, the main purpose of the *liqo* and other Tarbiyah activities is to train individuals to provide *da'wa* – i.e. to tell other people about the *liqo's* teachings. For example, when they come to accept that un-

[51] Her grandmother's belief here is basically a 'superstition' – an 'irrational' belief in supernatural powers relating to receiving good and bad luck.

Islamic traditions have to be eliminated, not only reform themselves, but are also eager to change their families' beliefs. Inviting other Muslims – especially one's family – to reform themselves is a practice that is strongly encouraged by the mentors. Based on the observations and interviews, I concluded that this is a part of the *liqo*'s *da'wa* strategy – to encourage trainees to go back to their families and societies and advise them to do what the *liqo* teaches. Similar approach is chosen and managed by female trainees when they campaigning PKS candidates for a political position. They have a very strong motivation and perception that this 'job' is part of their *da'wa*. Moreover, this is also used as a strategy for encouraging new members to join the *liqo* sessions, and a part of the more general *da'wa* strategy designed by the Tarbiyah to create preachers (*da'i)* who are able to conduct *da'wa* for everyone and everywhere. Retno, a female trainee (*mutarabbiyah*) who used to be a member of a *liqo* group in the Kemanggisan area of Jakarta but moved to a *liqo* group in Pondok Aren-Tangerang shared her *da'wa* experience as follows:

> I have been trying to remind them about this wrong tradition, because many of the village people are still my big family. Usually, after that, I leave them to think. I do not really care about their response. The most important thing for me is to do what I have to do, which is to give them true Islamic understandings on such practices (un-Islamic rituals).

Women's reception of Ibadah

One of the next lessons to be prioritised in the *liqo* sessions is the topic of *ibadah* (worship).[52] My research revealed that a strong emphasis is placed on ritual activities within the *liqo* community. Athya, a female mentor (*mutarabbiyah*) voiced her concerns as follows:

> The subject of *ibadah* in the *liqo* is very crucial in order to remind Muslims about their obligations towards God, especially in the modern era. Sometimes we find a situation where we are very busy or too lazy to perform our daily '*ibadah*, such as five-time obligatory prayers, reading the Qur'an, and the *Tahajud* prayer.

The variety of ritual activities or acts of worship in a *liqo* group depends on the agreements made between the mentor and the trainees of each *liqo* group. One *liqo* group could pursue different types of *ibadah* acts or have different targets concerning the quantity of acts to perform in relation to another group. Miya, a *liqo* female trainee who has been a member of the *liqo* for about 7 years shared her experiences:

> In the beginning of each *liqo* meeting, usually both mentors and trainees will discuss and decide together on how many and what kind of rituals should be monitored through the evaluation sheet (*sofhah mutaba'ah*). For my current

[52] *Ibadah* means 'ritual', and refers to the codified procedures that express human beings' relationship with God. In Islam, *ibadah* involves the profession of faith, prayer (*shalat*), fasting (*shaum*), the giving of alms (*zakah*), and pilgrimage (*hajj*) (Rippin 2005).

> mentor and group, we have three key rituals to put in our *sofhah mutaba'ah*. The first is to pray voluntary, *Dhuha*; the second is to perform obligatory prayers (*shalat wajib*) in the mosque collectively (*secara berjamaah*); and the last is to read the Qur'an on an everyday basis so that one *juz* of the Qur'an can be finished in one month.[53] Since all rituals are our own decision with the mentor, we do not need to have difficulty or burden in doing all of these activities.

Although the trainees have a chance to 'negotiate' concerning the rituals they perform, the *liqo* does set certain requirements. For example, Thifa, a young female mentor of a *liqo* explained:

> The standard of *ibadah* recommended and monitored by the *liqo* is Monday and Thursday's voluntary fasting (*shaum sunnah*), which is twice in a week, or it is also allowed [to be] the three days voluntary fasting in a month for those who have difficulty in performing two days fasting in a week.[54] Another activity is reading one page of the Qur'an per day and doing the *Dhuha* prayer and the voluntary prayers before or after five time obligatory prayers.[55]

These *ibadah* activities – as interviewees stated and my observations attested – are fully planned and monitored through a regular review and evaluation sheet called *sofhah mutaba'ah*. This evaluation sheet is a way for mentors to keep track of their trainees' performance, and the same evaluation sheet is provided for both male and female *liqo* groups. It is designed to ensure that the objectives of the *liqo* are achieved. For many of the trainees that I interacted with, both during and outside the *liqo* sessions, the *liqo* was seen as the place for training a variety of *ibadah*. The greatest advantage they received was to improve the quality and routine of their *ibadah*.

Athya, a neighbour of mine who had been a member of the *liqo* for more than 15 years acknowledged that she found herself "sometimes lazy for doing the daily rituals such as *Tahajud* prayer and reading al-Qur'an".[56] She thus saw it as a benefit to have her rituals checked by the mentors through the *sofhah mutaba'ah*. The *sofhah mutaba'ah* review system shows the extent to which the *liqo* pays attention to the lesson of *ibadah* and its practice. This was evident in the advice that I witnessed the mentor of our group giving trainees concerning becoming accustomed to ritual practices, such as conducting prayers five times a day collectively at the mosques (*as-sholat al-jama'ah fi al-masajid*), performing voluntary prayers (*as-sholat as-sunnah*), reading the Qur'an (*tilawah*), and performing voluntary fasting (*As-shaum as-sunnah*). Under the mentors' monitoring and the *sofhah mutaba'ah* system, a trainee who does not perform one of these rituals will likely feel shame in the presence of other more disciplined trainees.

[53] *Juz (*Arabic, plural: *ajza)* literally means 'part'. The Qur'an is divided into thirty parts.

[54] *Shaum* (Ar), *puasa* (Ind) is fasting or the abstention from all food, drink and sexual intercourse during daylight hours. There is an obligatory form of *shaum*, which includes fasting during Ramadan, and a non-obligatory form of *shaum*, which involves choices such as fasting on Mondays and Thursdays.

[55] *Shalat* (Arabic and Indonesian) means 'prayer'. The ritual required in Islam is that of five specific periods of prayer a day.

[56] *Tahajud* prayer is a voluntary nightly prayer that Muslims perform in addition to their five obligatory prayers.

However, this monitoring system is perceived as a burden by some of the trainees. I met Fathya, a former female trainee of the *liqo* who was disappointed with this strict rule of *ibadah*, and quit the *liqo* sessions, saying: "the *ibadah* that I must perform in a day is too many for me, because I need also to consider other work that I should fulfil to raise money for the family". Leaders of the *liqo* maintain that the objective of this lesson is to build an in-depth consciousness for practising ritual activities consistently and regularly. The movement wants to train all *liqo* members to perform these rituals habitually. Ahmad, one of the most influential leaders among the Tarbiyah community points out that the 'notification' (*ta'limat*) is given to all levels of the *liqo* community – from its leaders, to its mentors, to its trainees – in order to make the rituals or acts of worship a habit. He provided the example below to make this clearer:

> A few days prior to the month of *Dzulhijjah*, the *ta'limat* will be spread among the *liqo* community asking them to struggle in ten days to finish reading all parts of the Al-Qur'an, to conduct five time prayers at the mosques, and to perform the sacrifice (*qurban*) of at least one buffalo (*kerbau*) for one family.[57] This *ta'limat* aims to make routines of these rituals among the community. For other Muslims, it is only *mubah* which is flexible – to be done or to be left.[58] However, we want to practice these rituals because this is a good opportunity for us. Apart from *Dzulhijjah*'s rituals, we also recommend all of the members to fast in *Yaum al-Arafah* (the final day of *hajj* in Mecca) and to spread this habit to their surroundings.[59]

My interviews and observations revealed that *ibadah* activities on a daily basis are regarded by the *liqo* community as the symbol or indication of true Muslims. *Ibadah* activities are the genuine expression of their piety and obedience to God's commands as individual Muslims. Moreover, these rituals represent the complete manifestation of the character of Islam for them, which needs to be adhered to and implemented by its followers. In other words, these rituals or acts of worship are regarded by the Tarbiyah movement as the key characteristics of pious Muslims. Thus, this analysis reveals that the *liqo* aims to strengthen the Islamic identity of its trainees through improving individuals' performances of religious rituals. Living in urban and modern society can cause Muslims to become less concerned with their daily *ibadah*, but this is central for the *liqo*, regardless of its trainees' other commitments. This focus thus shows that the *liqo* attempts to Islamise its trainees.

Conclusion

This paper has explained the lived experiences of women's member of *liqo* in Indonesia. It demonstrated the extent to which female members at the lower level of the *liqo* share their lived religious experiences of joining the *liqo* and receiving its lessons. It is

[57] Dzulhijjah is the last month in the Islamic calendar. The name of the month refers to the annual worship of Muslims '*Hajj*' (pilgrimage).

[58] *Mubah* is an Arabic term that refers to an action that is neither recommended nor forbidden. It is, therefore, religiously neutral.

[59] *Al-Yaom al-Arafah* (the day of Arafah) is the day of 9th Dzulhijjah, on which it is recommended that Muslims fast.

obvious that the weekly *liqo* sessions have been designed and developed by the Tarbiyah movement of the PKS. From the early 1980s, the *liqo* has always focused on improving private piety through *da'wa*, but was transformed in 1998 to also develop public piety via Islamic political party. This new formality led to the reformulation of the Tarbiyah movement's official structure, official curricula and recruitment system. Membership associated with the *liqo* of the Tarbiyah movement thus became more political with the emergence of the PKS. The drive to promote their *da'wa* messages to the Indonesian society as a whole from the end of 1990s built 'a mutual relationship' between the *liqo*-Tarbiyah community and the PKS, but also moved the *liqo* away from its original *da'wa* activities and orientations. From the point of view of the leaders of the party (or the movement), the informal structures associated with the *liqo* significantly contributes to the growth and mobilisation of the PKS's cadres and develops the quality of the *da'wa* party, as the PKS has appointed *liqo* graduates and senior *liqo* activists as the party elites. They also consider it to be the case that the PKS enables the *liqo* to expand and mobilise its *da'wa* network through its various activities. For the cadres at the middle and lower levels of the movement, however, especially at the grassroots level, the formalisation and pragmatism of the party has mixed and thus diluted their 'pure' *da'wa* ideologies and orientations through its focus on political interests and strategies. The female *liqo* community's growth occurs via personal networks, social networks and institutional networks. However, based on my observation to the female *liqo* group, networks created through informal personal relationships still represent the strongest and most common way of attracting people to join the *liqo* community. *Liqo* groups grow over time as every mentor and trainee, as part of their *da'wa*, tries to 'convert' friends, family and neighbours to the *liqo* community. This doubling-up of friendships or family relationship and religious sessions establishes a high degree of group solidarity and loyalty within the *liqo*-Tarbiyah community. Informal social networks remain an absolutely key resource for the movement.

Thus, I found that the lived experiences of female *liqo* community are heterogeneous and complex. Their motivations for joining *liqo* are not merely to improve their religiosity and piety in many cases, or by political desires as the leaders expect them to be. Other significant reasons for these members joining *liqo* include expanding their social networks (finding new friends), strengthening existing friendships, and obeying their husbands who are PKS functionaries and member of the Tarbiyah movement. Even though the lived religion and experiences of these members indicate the complexity of their engagement with the *liqo*, the lessons given in the weekly *liqo* sessions are nonetheless relatively effective in transmitting the official discourse of its leaders. These lessons not only improve their knowledge of Islam, but also build their political awareness and forge a common Islamic cultural and political identity among the members. The lessons emphasising particular perspectives and practices not only regarding religious contents such as *aqidah* (faith) and *ibadah* (acts of worship), but also political contents on *ghazwul fikri* (ideological conquest). These lessons are designed to create piety, obedience, and commitment in the *liqo* members, both religiously and politically. This emphasis provides the mode for the expression of their individual piety and Islamic identity. This piety and identity, in turn, creates certain characteristics in the *liqo* community, which have become common symbolic expressions unifying the *liqo* community whilst also differentiating it from other religious communities within the Indonesian public sphere.

Through the weekly lessons, the *liqo* aims to introduce a common set of shared life norms, which include all aspects of life (such as beliefs, worship, and politics). These represent a form of Islamic 'totalism' that is widely adopted by modern Islamists. The *liqo* provides its trainees with a regular and monitored form of training that enables them to apply all these aspects of Islam in their everyday lives. This set of life norms creates their similarities as well as distinctiveness from other religious communities in Indonesia. For instance, the lesson of *ghazwul fikri* is very important in terms of the *liqo* community's perspective about the cultural and ideological enemies of Islam. This perspective creates particular attitudes among the female *liqo* community, who tend to be suspicious of other cultures, especially Western culture, which they consider as a potential threat to Islam and Muslim society in general, and has led them to place people within one of two categories – 'friends' or 'enemies'. This lesson thus seeks to build the 'self-awareness' of the female *liqo* community about foreign cultures and ideas outside Islam, and to increase their care in dealing with them. For example, these female *liqo* cadres are very active in responding to the Ahok blasphemy case in 2017 although they were not part of the more conventional hard-liner groups such as HTI and FPI. Similarly, the lessons of *aqidah* and *ibadah* aim to create *liqo* perspectives, attitudes and performances that distinguish *liqo* women from women in other Muslim communities in Indonesia. A similar distinctiveness in their perspectives and performances can also be seen through the impact of the lessons of *aqidah* and *ibadah*. Thus, although there are several similarities between the basic perspectives of the *liqo* and those of other Muslim communities in relation to these four aspects of Muslim life, the differences are nonetheless plainly evident in their everyday lives.

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